

Jesus is one person with two natures, divine and human. Through the incarnation, Jesus shows us what it means to be fully human. Jesus also reveals the Triune God to us. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. With his Bread of Life Discourse, Jesus gives particular attention to God the Father.

Let us step back for a moment to God as Father before Jesus reveals the Father to us. “In Israel, God is called ‘Father’ inasmuch as he is Creator of the world... God is the first origin of everything and transcendent authority” (238-239). God is a Father with a special relationship to Israel. Through the covenant and the gift of the law to Israel, ‘his first-born son,’ God is the Father of the king of Israel.

Father implies a certain tenderness. “Most especially he is ‘the Father of the poor’, of the orphaned and the widowed, who are under his loving protection” (CCC 238). God extends a loving care for all his children.

“God’s parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood, which emphasizes God’s immanence, the intimacy between Creator and creature. The language of faith thus draws on the human experience of parents, who are in a way the first representatives of God for man. But this experience also tells us that human parents are fallible and can disfigure the face of fatherhood and motherhood” (CCC 239). There is a limit to our language and understanding. “God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: he is God. He also transcends human fatherhood and motherhood, although he is their origin and standard: no one is father as God is Father” (CCC 239).

In this Old Testament sense, the trinitarian identity of God is still hidden. We think in terms of one God and one Person. “Jesus revealed that God is Father in an unheard-of sense: he is Father not only in being Creator; he is eternally Father in relation to his only Son, who is eternally Son only in relation to his Father: ‘No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him’ (Mt 11:27)” (CCC 240).

Yesterday, I explained that Jesus revealed his identity through a series of “I am” statements. In chapter 6 of John, Jesus teaches “I am the bread of life” (Jn 6:48). In chapter 10, he sheds further light on the mystery by teaching, “I am the gate” (Jn 10:9a). Jesus reveals the Father to us, and the Father reveals Jesus to us. “Everyone who listens to my Father and learns from him comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father” (Jn 6:45b-46). In this sense, the gate is two way.

We recall the Baptism of Jesus. “After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened [for him], and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Mt 3:16-17). With context, we understand this is the voice of God the Father revealing Jesus to us.

At the Transfiguration, the Father reveals Jesus again: “A bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him” (Mt 17:5). The Father is trying to help the Apostles listen to Jesus as he predicts his own passion and death. Until the resurrection, they will not fully grasp the message.

Our ultimate destiny is to be united in heaven with the Trinity. There we shall fully understand the mysteries of our faith. As the bread of life, Jesus wants to help transform us from our human nature to our ultimate destiny ... sharing in the divine nature. “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my Flesh for the life of the world” (Jn 6:51).

In closing, let me share a brief verse from a poem by Saint Therese of Lisieux:
Living Bread, Bread of Heaven, divine Eucharist, a sacred Mystery!
that Love has brought forth....
Come live in my heart, Jesus, my white Host, Just for today.ⁱ

ⁱ <https://www.archives-carmel-lisieux.fr/english/carmel/index.php/pn-5> My Song for Today,
Poem # 5.